



*Always Ready  
Always There*

# *The Gem State Guardian*

The official newsletter of the  
**Idaho National Guard**

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## *US Fish and Wildlife Service Honors Idaho Army National Guard's Orchard Combat Training Center for Collaborative Conservation*

(Story adapted from a **USFWS** news release)

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service presented the national Military Conservation Partner Award to the Idaho Army National Guard's Orchard Combat Training Center (IDARNG OCTC) on May 24.

The award, established by the Service in 2005, recognizes military installations that demonstrate excellence in conservation, and a commitment to working with partners to achieve stewardship of fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats. Only one installation of the hundreds in the United States receives the Fish and Wildlife Service award each year, including all branches of active and reserve installations.

The IDARNG has actively worked to conserve Idaho's native sagebrush-steppe habitat through research, funding, proactive fire management and other conservation efforts at the training site, while still fully implementing its military mission. The OCTC contains high-quality sagebrush-steppe habitat that supports one of the largest known populations of the rare slickspot peppergrass, a plant found only in Idaho's Snake River Plain, and proposed for protection under the Endangered Species Act. Since 1991, IDARNG has been a leader in the conservation of slickspot peppergrass, working with state, federal, Tribal and other partners.

"The Idaho National Guard's Orchard Combat Training Center has the distinction of being the very first National



Proudly Holding the Military Conservation Partner Award, Idaho National Guard Commanding General, Maj. Gen. Gary Saylor (left) and Charlie Baun, Conservation Branch Manager for the Idaho National Guard stand with other key partners involved in the achievement. Photo by Maj. Chris Borders

Guard or reserve installation to receive this recognition for conservation excellence. This is a significant achievement for the State of Idaho and the Idaho Army National Guard," said Michael Carrier, the Service's Idaho State Supervisor. "IDARNG's best management practices have influenced conservation success beyond OCTC's boundaries across Idaho's landscape. This recognition is well-earned."

Since the 1990s, the Idaho Army National Guard has implemented rapid response fire suppression action; emphasized the conservation and restoration of native plants; and worked with partners to increase knowledge about native plants and slickspot peppergrass. The OCTC's 1998 Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan (INRMP) and subsequent 2004 and 2013 updates emphasize the conservation, restoration, and enhancement of native sagebrush-

steppe habitat and the species that depend on it.

"We're proud to accept this honor today," said Major General Gary L. Saylor, Idaho Adjutant General. "It's an acknowledgment of the balance we work each day to achieve, using state and federal lands, to train our troops for combat while at the same time protecting natural and cultural resources."

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